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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 8930
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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TAGS: PREL PTER PGOV PINS IR TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY: FM GUL DODGES ISSUE OF IRANIAN EXTREMISM

REF: A. ANKARA 6518

1B. SECSTATE 199863
1C. SECSTATE 199225

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b, d).

11. (C) We delivered reftel demarches to the MFA on October 31, emphasizing the need for the GOT to make clear its rejection of Ahmadinejad's violent and irresponsible rhetoric. Acting Director General for Middle Eastern Affairs Ambassador Aydin Evirgen promised us that Gul would deliver a strong message condemning the Iranian statement at a November 1 press conference.

12. (C) At the press conference, Gul failed to criticize Ahmadinejad's statement in either the text of his prepared remarks or in response to a direct question from the press. Gul's half-hour prepared statement provided a tour d'horizon of ongoing regional issues. On the subject of Iran, all he said was that Iran should cooperate with the IAEA and be open and transparent regarding its pursuit of nuclear energy. Gul made no reference to the Ahmadinejad statement.

13. (C) After Gul's prepared remarks, the first journalist to ask a question stated that there had been widespread condemnation of the remarks and queried Gul why the GOT had not condemned the Iranian statement. Gul responded that the Prime Minister and the MFA had made sufficient statements. (Note: Both had responded to questions, see para 4, below, for their statements. End note.) Turkey had, openly and clearly, shared and agreed with the reactions of the international community in this regard. Let no one try to direct us. The region needs peace, and Turkey is always against anything that could harm regional peace. Turkey, as a country in the region, attaches importance to being part of the solution to regional problems; in this context, Turkey wishes that new enmities not emerge in this region.

14. (C) Gul's press conference was not the first time Turkish officials had declined adequately to address Ahmadinejad's statement. On October 27 at a London press conference, Prime Minister Erdogan was asked a question about the Iranian statement; he responded that he hoped the Iranian President would return to moderation, and that Turkey would determine its own foreign policy. On October 28, MFA spokesman Namik Tan responded to a similar question by stating that it was "not possible to approve" of Ahmadinejad's statement. He

stated that "Turkey continues to pursue relations with all countries in the region based on mutual respect and cooperation and believes that the conflicts in the region can only be resolved through dialogue and peaceful methods based on international legitimacy."

¶ 15. (C) Israeli DCM Nahshon related to us that their Ambassador saw Gul the afternoon of November 1, and delivered a letter from FM Shalom, requesting that the GOT speak out on the Ahmedini-Nejad remarks. Nahshon characterized the meeting as "good." Gul reportedly told the Israelis that the GOT statements "sound stronger in Turkish than in English" and said the GOT would "send a clear message" to Tehran that Turkey is worried about Iranian statements as well as its nuclear ambitions. Gul did not say how or when this message would be conveyed, nor did he react to the Israeli suggestion that the MFA summon the Iranian ambassador and demand an explanation.

¶ 16. (C) Comment. We believe that Ambassador Evirgen genuinely expected Gul to deliver a strong condemnation of Iran, but Gul chose not to follow his ministry's advice. This is highly unfortunate and put the Turks out of step with key partners in NATO and the EU. We will follow up with Gul and with the Prime Minister to urge a more direct public statement and to ensure that they understand the gravity of this situation and the increasing threat that Iranian extremism poses to the entire region. End Comment.

MCELDOWNEY